What is claimed is:

1.   A message transmitting and receiving apparatus comprising:

5   memory means for storing a keyword and a degree of importance of said keyword;

detector means for detecting an occurrence of a message;

extractor means for extracting a keyword from a received message; and

10   importance determiner means for determining a degree of importance of a keyword.

2.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 further comprising means for providing at least one of visual and audio indications of

15   an occurrence of said extracted keyword in a manner determined by a degree of importance of said extracted keyword.

3.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 further comprising means for deleting a keyword having a degree of importance lower

20   than a threshold value.

4.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said extractor means further stores a new keyword extracted from a received message in said memory means together with a degree of

25   importance of said new keyword.

5.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said extractor means extracts also a candidate keyword from a received message, and said apparatus further comprises register means for

30   storing in said memory means, a candidate keyword as a keyword, together with a degree of importance of the candidate keyword, when a user of the apparatus responds to received message data containing the candidate keyword within a predetermined range.

35   6.   The apparatus according to Claim 5 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of messages.

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7.   The apparatus according to Claim 5 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of lines.

8.   The apparatus according to Claim 5 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of words.

9.   The apparatus according to Claim 5 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of characters.

10.   The apparatus according to Claim 5 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined time period.

11.   The apparatus according to Claim 5 wherein said message data within a predetermined range is messages received consecutively from a same client.

12.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means determines a degree of importance of a keyword stored in said memory means, depending on whether or not a user of the apparatus has responded to a received message containing said keyword.

13.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means determines a degree of importance of a keyword stored in said memory means, depending on whether or not a user of the apparatus has responded to a received message containing said keyword within a predetermined range.

14.   The apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of messages.

15.   The apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of lines.

16.   The apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of words.

17.   The apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of characters.

18.   The apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined time period.

19.   The apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein said message data within a predetermined range is messages received consecutively from a same client.

20.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means changes a degree of importance of a keyword for a predetermined time period after an occurrence of a transmitted message from a user of the apparatus.

21.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means lowers a degree of importance of a keyword for a predetermined time period after an occurrence of a transmitted message from a user of the apparatus.

22.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means changes a degree of importance of a keyword during a time period when a user of the apparatus is operating an input device of the apparatus and during a predetermined time period after the user stops operating the input device.

23.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means lowers a degree of importance of a keyword during a time period when a user of the apparatus is operating an input device of the apparatus and during a predetermined time period after the user stops operating the input device.

24.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means determines a degree of importance of a keyword according to schedule data of a user of the apparatus.

25.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means raises a degree of importance of a keyword according to schedule data of a user of the apparatus.

26.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means sets, in accordance with a time period, a keyword and a degree of importance thereof designated by a user of said apparatus, the degree of importance of said keyword effective during said time period.

27.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means determines a degree of importance of a keyword in accordance with the number of occurrences of the keyword in a predetermined range of received message data.

28.   The apparatus according to Claim 27 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of messages.

29.   The apparatus according to Claim 27 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of lines.

30.   The apparatus according to Claim 27 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of words.

31.   The apparatus according to Claim 27 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of characters.

32.   The apparatus according to Claim 27 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined time period.

33.   The apparatus according to Claim 27 wherein said message data within a predetermined range is messages received consecutively from a same client.

34.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means lowers a degree of importance of a

keyword when the number of occurrences of the keyword in received message data within a predetermined time period exceeds a predetermined number.

5   35.   The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said importance determiner means determines a degree of importance of a keyword in accordance with an attribute of a received message containing the keyword.

10   36.   The apparatus according to Claim 35 wherein the attribute of said received message is a network, a channel or a client.

           37.   A message transmitting and receiving apparatus
15   comprising:
           memory means for storing a keyword and a degree of importance of said keyword;
           detector means for detecting an occurrence of a message;
           extractor means for extracting a keyword from a received
20   message; and
           means for providing at least one of visual and audio indications of an occurrence of said extracted keyword in a manner determined by a degree of importance of said extracted keyword.

25   38.   A program stored on a recording medium for transmitting and receiving messages, said program being for use in an information processing apparatus, said information processing apparatus including a processor and memory means, said program causing said processor to perform the steps of:
30   detecting an occurrence of a message;
           extracting a keyword from a received message;
           determining a degree of importance of a keyword; and
           storing a keyword and a degree of importance of the keyword in said memory means.
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           39.   The program according to Claim 38 further causing said processor to perform the step of providing at least one of visual and

audio indications of an occurrence of said extracted keyword in a manner determined by a degree of importance of said extracted keyword.

5   40.   The program according to Claim 38 further causing said processor to perform the step of deleting a keyword having a degree of importance lower than a given threshold value.

    41.   The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of
10 extracting includes storing, in said memory means, a new keyword extracted from a received message together with a degree of importance thereof.

    42.   The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of
15 extracting includes also extracting a candidate keyword from a received message, and said program further causes said processor to perform the step of storing, in said memory means, a candidate keyword as a keyword, together with a degree of importance thereof, when a user of the apparatus has responded to received message
20 data containing the candidate keyword within a predetermined range.

    43.   The program according to Claim 42 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of messages.
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    44.   The program according to Claim 42 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of lines.

    45.   The program according to Claim 42 wherein said
30 predetermined range is a predetermined number of words.

    46.   The program according to Claim 42 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of characters.

35   47.   The program according to Claim 42 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined time period.

48.   The program according to Claim 42 wherein said message data within a predetermined range is messages received consecutively from a same client.

5   49.   The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance determines a degree of importance of a keyword stored in said memory means, depending on whether or not a user of the apparatus has responded to a received message containing said keyword within a predetermined

10   range.

50.   The program according to Claim 49 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of messages.

15   51.   The program according to Claim 49 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of lines.

52.   The program according to Claim 49 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of words.

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53.   The program according to Claim 49 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of characters.

54.   The program according to Claim 49 wherein said

25   predetermined range is a predetermined time period.

55.   The program according to Claim 49 wherein said message data within a predetermined range is messages received consecutively from a same client.

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56.   The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes determining a degree of importance of a keyword, depending on whether or not a user of the apparatus has responded to a received message containing said

35   keyword.

57.   The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of

determining a degree of importance includes changing a degree of importance of a keyword for a predetermined time period after an occurrence of a transmitted message from a user of the apparatus.

58. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes lowering a degree of importance of a keyword for a predetermined time period after an occurrence of a transmitted message from a user of the apparatus.

59. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes changing a degree of importance of a keyword during a time period when a user of the apparatus is operating an input device of the apparatus and during a predetermined time period after the user stops operating the input device.

60. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes lowering a degree of importance of a keyword during a time period when a user of the apparatus is operating an input device of the apparatus and during a predetermined time period after the user stops operating the input device.

61. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes determining a degree of importance of a keyword according to schedule data of a user of the apparatus.

62. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes raising a degree of importance of a keyword according to schedule data of a user of the apparatus.

63. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes setting, in accordance with a time period, a keyword and a degree of importance thereof designated by a user of said apparatus, the degree of importance of

said keyword effective during said time period.

64. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes determining a degree of importance of a keyword in accordance with the number of occurrences of the keyword in a predetermined range of received message data.

65. The program according to Claim 64 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of messages.

66. The program according to Claim 64 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of lines.

67. The program according to Claim 64 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of words.

68. The program according to Claim 64 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined number of characters.

69. The program according to Claim 64 wherein said predetermined range is a predetermined time period.

70. The program according to Claim 64 wherein said message data within a predetermined range is messages received consecutively from a same client.

71. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes lowering a degree of importance of a keyword when the number of occurrences of the keyword in received message data within a predetermined time period exceeds a predetermined number.

72. The program according to Claim 38 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes determining a degree of importance of a keyword in accordance with an attribute of a received message containing the keyword.

73. The program according to Claim 38 wherein the attribute of said received message is a network, a channel or a client.

5   74. A program stored on a recording medium for transmitting and receiving messages, said program being for use in an information processing apparatus, said information processing apparatus including a processor and memory means, said program causing said processor to perform the steps of:

10   storing a keyword and a degree of importance thereof in said memory means;
          detecting an occurrence of a message;
          extracting a keyword from a received message; and
          providing at least one of visual and audio indications of an
15   occurrence of said extracted keyword.

          75. A method for processing a keyword in a message transmitting and receiving system, comprising the steps of:
          detecting an occurrence of a message;
20   extracting a keyword from a received message;
          determining a degree of importance of a keyword; and
          storing a keyword and a degree of importance thereof in memory means.

25   76. The method according to Claim 75 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance determines a degree of importance of a keyword stored in said memory means, depending on whether or not a user of the system has responded to a received message containing said keyword within a predetermined range.
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          77. The method according to Claim 75 wherein said step of determining a degree of importance includes setting, in accordance with a time period, a keyword and a degree of importance thereof designated by a user of said apparatus, the degree of importance of
35   said keyword effective during said time period.

          78. The method according to Claim 75 wherein said step of

determining a degree of importance includes determining a degree of importance of a keyword in accordance with an attribute of a received message containing the keyword.

5   79.   A method for processing a keyword in a message transmitting and receiving system, comprising the steps of;
   storing a keyword and a degree of importance thereof in said memory means;
   detecting an occurrence of a message;
10   extracting a keyword from a received message; and
   providing at least one of visual and audio indications of an occurrence of said extracted keyword.